Northwick Lodge, Hampton Hill.
England.

Thursday Oct 10th 1963

Dearest René

Thank you very much for your huge postcard of Ardmore. Looks marvellous doesn't it – or does it not, or, there's marvellous for you. I see they say on back that these Eire Round Towers weren't used for defence but for storeage, or as belfries, watch towers, & Co, well, I suppose that makes a bit more sense.

You dont say whether you got my last letter I posted ~~the~~ it a week or ten days back. It was rather long I'm afraid, because I remember it had to have an extra stamp on it as it was over-weight. The chap at the post office here said I dont dont know when it will get to Eire, because there's a ~~[illegible]~~ strike of postal workers there. But I hope it did not go astray as it dealt with some matters you spoke of in your previous letter. Let me know if you got it. About ~~the~~ a day or so after posting it I had a card from Charles B. & Joan with a photograph of the house on it – it looks marvellous – but terribly big, how on earth Do you deal with it all without a staff of servants? Charles said he was taking you & Joan for a two days motor trip in Kerry. I hope that was nice. On Sunday, (Oct 6th) Michael R. phoned me from Brighton ~~and~~ said he'd been to see you ~~[illegible]~~ and he said you were both well & happy & that the house & all its surroundings were splendid. I'm so glad. I have no news, this ~~[illegible]~~ is written mainly to

Friday. Oct 11th. I've been going through the typescript which Nest made of my MS of the Monograph for The Ancient M. Things, she does type awfully well & clearly. But I've discovered a mistake of mine that made me very fed-up. It is odd how ones' memory lets one down. You know that carol There ~~comes~~ a galley laden, well in my monograph I had ~~[illegible]~~ made an allusion to it, saying that the A.M. had 'Charity for Mast' as in the Carol, & that that Charity was the gibbet of the Cross. Well, I find I'm quite wrong – It's 'Charity for Mainsail & Holy Ghost for Mast' – so no use to me with ref. ~~[illegible]~~ the Ancient Mariner. I found this out, mercifully, by pure accident. In 1930 Xmas, you & Joan gave me a little book of carols, Eng. Lat. French, in a blue paper cover, & I've kept it always with your poem Green Xmas* together, ~~[illegible]~~ for some unknown reason, with the map of the trench area, Hazebrouck 5A, and in trying to find Provins mentioned on page 5 of the little ~~[illegible]~~ found & re-read your book of carols & so came on the true rendering. It means the elimination of ~~the~~ the passage in my monograph that [illegible] (p. 5) I found it before it got printed.

* What a good poem that is. It still reads as fresh as ever. Did you write any others? Perhaps you will in your elder years in "the Land o' the Saints & Scholars".*

* Did I ever tell you about the Irish woman who did the house-work in our house where we lived in ~~[illegible]~~ Sheffield Terrace, & who, one ~~day~~ day when I was in bed with 'flu and happened to be reading the Bible, ~~[illegible]~~ said: "Is that that the Scriptures you're readin'?" I said 'Well, yes,' & she said ~~[illegible]~~ "Oi said to the Canon below [i.e. Canon Walton who was rector of the local Kensington Church] Oi saw no sign of the holy book in the land of the saints & scholars".

ask if my other letter arrived. Douglas C. was coming over the other evening to bring back my MS. monograph on The Ancient Mariner, but Nest rang up at the last minute to say he was not very well, & she thought it best he did not come. I feared that perhaps he was in for the 'flu or something but I rang up next day & it was O.K., he had had a ~~[illegible]~~ bad head-ache but was better next day. But I am a bit worried about him, he's awfully nervy I notice of late & works so hard ~~at~~ at the confounded BBC. job. But Nest tells me that he's due fairly soon ~~for~~ for a proper holiday, Apparently the BBC. give chaps a sort of 'long vacation'* after 25 years service! – and D. is about due for that sometime early in the ~~early~~ new year, so that will be nice for him. He's quite O.K., but I have noticed a worried thing that he used not to have. He's amazingly young really for his age. I did not realize he was only about eight years younger than I am. I thought he was much younger than that.

of three months duration. This is strictly between ourselves. It was only that I've ~~feet~~ felt he was just a bit nervy. Nest thinks that when he gets his 3 months leave, he may go for a ~~prop~~ proper holiday to Greece, perhaps, which seems a jolly good idea. After all he's scarcely had a breather from the BBC. thing for all these years, & a lot of worries one way & another.

Have just written a long letter to Tom. He's publishing some (I think) series of books, not sure, it may be about one book, anyway he was writing a brief thing about it & it ~~was~~ involves the idea of the ~~[illegible]~~ Compass being connected with the Cross. He rang me up about it and I said I could not recall any connection, but subsequently remembered that on the 'shipman's card' they did at one period, certainly in the 14th, 15th & 16th centuries put a ✠ in place of the word East or Levante, just as they put a fleur-de-lys in place of North ⚜ & that that has remained whereas the ✠ has ever since been dropped.

Anyway, this caused me to go into the matter & look up what Prof. Taylor has to say on the matter, and other books which I have. It was evidently of this that Tom was thinking. I can't imagine why I had forgotten about all this when he 'phoned me. I think it was because he mentioned the Compass (in the sense of the magnetic needle) that made me say I could not recall any connection. He was just

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off to Frankfurt-am-Main for about 10 Days, but I was able to catch him before he went & explain my mistake. But by then I had written a long letter telling him what either I could find out.

Then, on Sunday, Mick rang from Brighton, as Tis said, to tell me of his visit to Tom, and he knows a ~~chap~~ chap who is an authority on the whole development of the 'shipman's card' & Compass, etc. so if Tom, when he returns from Germany, wants more precise information, it will be possible to obtain it. I was amused in one or two things I came across in looking-up this stuff, especially about a chap called Guidot of Provins* (half way between Paris & Troyes) a round about 1200 a poet it seems, who said "Would that the Holy Father were as unchangeable as the immovable Star," i.e. the Pole Star. Also that Roger Bacon (1210(?) — 1290(?)) writing to the Pope (or writing a thesis for the Pope) was very emphatic in explaining that the magnetic needle (by that time in use or known about for a century & a half or more) was not drawn, as was popularly supposed, by the Stella Maris but to the attraction of the terrestrial pole. It was understandable that the mystical chaps should have made the association, for previous to the use of the magnetised needle, the Stella Nautica or Stella Maris had been the associated with our Lady*, as being the one fixed point in the heavens upon which all their navigation depended, both in the Mediterranean & in up here in the North Sea & Atlantic. When I was writing *The Anathemata* (1948 — 52) as far as I could find out chaps were not absolutely certain that some sort of magnetic iron was not used before the 11th & 12th Centuries. But Prof. Taylor in 1956 *The Haven-Finding Art*, makes it virtually certain that it was not used earlier. But it was a seeming uncertainty about the matter that made me write in *The Ana*, page, 99, (Middle Sea & Lear Sea)

"Now (true to a touched stone?)
north with the happy veer
and by good management."

I should not now be able to put it thus

* I thought it must be a place of that same name I remembered in the war-area, but when I looked on a map I have from the war period the only Provins I can find is well behind the German line east of La Bassée. Very odd, because I could have sworn I'd been there — maybe it's a common place-name & there was one behind our lines as well, I don't know.

* Hence Ave Maris Stella, Dei Mater Alma etc. which I cannot think of without thinking of George Maxwell & Eric, Hilary P. & Co singing every day at Vespers, in their chapel at Ditchling, as Joan too will no doubt remember. I believe it was composed soon after 800 AD.

even ~~[illegible]~~ with a question-mark and in brackets. It was the vague ~~possib~~ possibility that scholars appeared still to entertain on the matter that made me put that line in, and as an interrogation.

Of course they knew all about 'touched stones', for centuries & centuries before that, but did not employ them to magnetize compass-needles until sometime between 1000 & ~~[illegible]~~ 1100 A.D., and not much in practice until the ~~[illegible]~~ the 13th or 14th Century. A Chap writing in Iceland in about 1300, familiar of course by then with the magnetic needle, states emphatically that when the Norsemen colonized Iceland a few hundred years* previously, they had no knowledge of the compass, but only of the ~~Pole~~ Pole Star as fixed, & the other stars, & ~~[illegible]~~ depended entirely upon this and a great knowledge of currents & took much notice of the direction of flights of birds & so on.

* I don't know exactly when, but I suppose in the 9th Cent. or earlier.

Just heard from my French friend who did the Sorbonne thesis on The Anathemata, that she's again failed at that ~~appally~~ appalling oral ~~examination [illegible]~~ part of ~~[illegible]~~ that ~~L'Agrégation~~ L'Agrégation thing. She did splendidly in the written part. I think I told you she was married over a year back & is expecting to have a ~~[illegible]~~ child in January or February. She & her husband were coming to pay a visit to England round about Xmas time, but have decided that with the birth of this child so near by then, it would not be very ~~[illegible]~~ wise. She's going to have another crack at the Agrégation ~~thing~~ again next summer. That will be the fourth time. ~~[illegible]~~ Each previous time it's been this awful oral inquisition that's been the trouble. It does sound to me a bit much. The candidate is questioned for hours ~~[illegible]~~ on end by a ~~[illegible]~~ group of professors — it's like a Court, with a lot of other outside people listening. I suppose it's a ~~[illegible]~~ process coming straight ~~through~~ from ~~the~~ the medieval period, of which the ~~English~~ University 'viva' is but a vestigial & formal leave-over. But there, at the Sorbonne, the full rigour is maintained. Indeed, I gather, from other sources, that it's got rather more exacting than it was. The reason being the pressure (as everywhere) of ~~technol~~ technological & scientific studies, which force those concerned with the Humanities to more & more exacting standards, greater professionalism and specialisation.

This is all a bit of bastard because clearly you can't apply to studies ~~to~~ to do with the Humanities (& the modern extension of them covering ~~[illegible]~~ everything other than the physical sciences) ~~because~~ the kind of tests applicable to technologies, because apperceptions of all sorts come in. I mean 'the Arts' in the old University ~~[illegible]~~ sense of the ~~[illegible]~~ Classics does involve a kinship with 'the arts' in our modern sense — painting, poetry & Co.

Take old Tiger Dawson for example — a 2nd ~~[illegible]~~ (or maybe a 3rd!) in History at Oxford, yet with a subsequent record that makes all these Double Firsts just bloody dunderheads. I take ~~but~~ as ~~[illegible]~~ indicating, in the main, that apperceptions and sensitivities of all sorts come into the picture just as they do with painters or writers. I don't *know*, but I imagine that in the case of the strictly scientific realm of study it is much easier to apply a process of selection by ~~exam~~ competitive examination which is what the Agrégat. thing is.

but I ~~think~~ it was a 2nd.

Heard an interesting & *distressing* thing the other day which has a bearing on this. Quite by accident Louis B. (some time back now), was tutoring a chap ~~who~~ turned ~~out~~ to be Tiger D.'s son. And it transpired that he had not the ~~[illegible]~~ vaguest *conception* of his father's greatness mainly because that bloody little shallow-minded journalistic Professor of History at Ox., Roper, had written somewhere or said to somebody that the Tiger was just an amateur — a gent. who went in for being a 'meta-historian.' This is between ourselves, but it *really is appalling*. Incidentally I saw Louis last Sunday, the first time for ages. He was very well & still working hard on the tutoring business. He was very pleased to hear you & Joan were happy in your new home. He'd had a three weeks holiday mainly in South-Eastern France & been visiting all sorts of Romanesque churches & places & showed me some jolly nice post-cards of places such as Souillac & Moissac & all sorts of places — Conques-en-Rouergue.

Well, must stop, Very, very much love to Joan & thank you both for the great card of Ardmore.

Been reading more oddments about all that family thing & the Celtic foundations & celibacy. & have come to the conclusion that it wasn't so very different anywhere else. That in the Anglo-Saxon church it was on the whole princely families & princesses linked by ties of blood or marriage who ran the show, for the precise reason that they were the only people who had the habit or rule & so on.* Same thing with celibacy, right through the Middle-Ages, continuous attempts to enforce it, but equally continuous evidence of chaps (bishops & others) having to tolerate either openly married clergy or concubinage, & in some cases, having to grant a sort of dispensation to legalize what in Canon Law was quite illegal. It seems that only after the Counter-Reformation & Trent was there any general & effective application of celibacy as we know it — among the secular clergy. At the same ~~time~~ it's true that from very early on ~~the~~ continuous attempts were made — the principle was ancient and emphatic, but was found difficult to enforce which makes the situation among the Celtic chaps not really so very different.

Much love to you René & Joan

Sorry for this boring letter Dai.

*And Bede, toward the end of his life, writing to somebody, says he's worried because Northumbrian noblemen were taking to a sort of imitation monastic life, which gave them lands & privileges & released them from leadership in war, but which was not real monasticism at all. It sounds as though they read & were cultivated, but had their female companions & a quiet time, but that it was a get out.

PS.
Hope Rosalind is OK. in her school at Waterford. What sort of school is it? You said something when I last saw you, before you departed, about a Quaker school, or was I quite mistaken? D.